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**Newsletter for the  
Lake County  
Health  
Department's  
Workforce  
Development  
Program**

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**Laid Off Grandmother Wins Statewide Award**

**Consuelo Perales** is one of only 26 individuals in Illinois awarded for her achievements at the Governor's State Awards in Springfield on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. Perales was recognized at the ceremony for her perseverance and dedication in achieving her employment goals.

Perales worked as a Packer at Keebler/Plantation for almost 19 years. She was devastated when the company announced that it would be closing by March 2000. Without a GED, she did not know how she could find another position that paid as well as her previous one. Additionally, she had recently become the sole caretaker for two young grandchildren. She didn't know when she could find time to look for a job.

Whenever a local company lays off a significant portion of its employees, a *Rapid Response Team* visits the company to inform workers of agencies and programs that can assist them in their job search. Perales says she felt that she was not alone after that visit. She soon became a frequent visitor of the Lake County IETC (Illinois Employment & Training Center) where she began working in the computer lab to increase her math and English skills. She attended job search workshops and used the IETC telephone and fax machine as she looked for work.

The *Lake County Health Department's Workforce Development Program*, a member of the IETC network, identified Perales as a good candidate for intensive job search help. *Workforce Development's* Liz Nelson interviewed Perales to determine her needs. With Nelson's help, Perales applied for subsidized day care at the YWCA. *Catholic Charities* assisted her in becoming a legal guardian of her grandchildren, and she applied for financial assistance for the children through the *Illinois Department of Human Services*.

Perales applied for a job through the *Lake County Community Action Project* and was successfully placed in a packing job at a local company in August 2000. Perales, who has worked there now for almost 1 year, earns \$11/hour. **"I feel that this job was meant for me. My co-workers are very supportive and my work environment is wonderful."** She hopes to find time to continue studying for her GED. In the meantime, she is thankful that she can support her family while doing a job she loves.

***Workforce Development congratulates JoAnn Eckman, Chairperson of the Lake County Workforce Investment Area. Ms. Eckman was recognized for "Business Leadership" at the 2001 Governor's State Awards.***



*Workforce Development is proud to be a part of the Lake County Health Department /Community Health Center. Workforce Development staff are located at the two Lake County IETCs (Illinois Employment & Training Centers). Call us to find out more!*

415 Washington Ste 104  
Waukegan, IL 60085  
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800 Lancer Lane  
Grayslake, IL 60030  
**(847) 543-7400**



**LakeCounty**

Health Department and  
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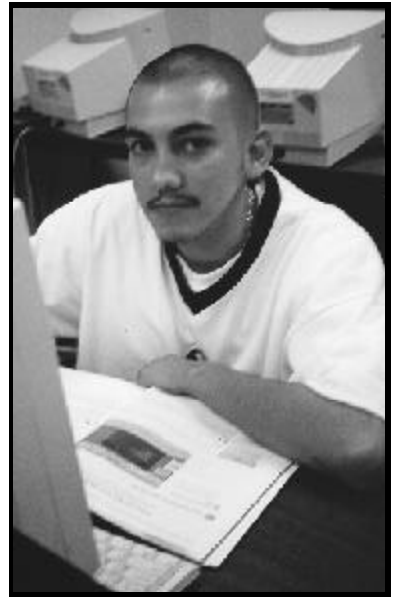
*Dale Galassie, M.A., M.S., Executive Director*

## Student Finds Career While Getting GED

**Luis Ortega** is the first student to complete his GED through an innovative new program for young people. Since June 14<sup>th</sup>, Ortega has been attending classes at *First Institute* from 12:30 to 4:30 every day. There, he prepared for his GED exams and continues to study computer software.

Ortega had to leave high school between his sophomore and junior year because of fights with other students. His family planned to place him in an alternative school. Then, they heard about the Career/GED Program sponsored by *Workforce Development*. The program is designed for young people ages 16 to 21 who may have been unsuccessful in a traditional school environment. Qualified youth are able to prepare for their GED while getting in-depth skills training—and they earn \$6 to \$8 per hour while they study.

The Career/GED Program is unique because it is computer-oriented and self-paced. Part of each day, Ortega completed projects using *Microsoft Word*, *Excel*, and *Powerpoint*. He prepared for his GED using a self-paced computer program called *PLATO* during the rest of the time. He is enthusiastic about *PLATO*. **“It made me learn stuff. Since 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I always flunked math. But the computer took me through everything step by step. I learned stuff I’d never learned before.”**



Instructor, Bobbie Zamora, says that students enroll in the Career/GED Program for various reasons, but they all are there with one goal—they want a second chance. She describes Ortega as very focused and determined to succeed. **“Once he got into the computer, he was lost. He’s very fascinated by computers.”**

Ortega is excited about the opportunities that he now has. He wants to use his knowledge of *Excel* to help with his father’s business. He says he enjoyed learning *Word* because of the graphic capabilities. He wants to continue his schooling in order to become a graphic designer. For now, he’s proud of what he has accomplished. **“I wanted to get my degree before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. I finished just two weeks before my birthday. That was a goal I had set for myself.”**

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## GED Success Leads to College

*Workforce Development* contracts with three training providers for the Career/GED program for out-of-school youth: *First Institute*, *Lake County Urban League*, and the *Lake County Forest Preserve*. **De’Andrea Holmes** chose to attend *Urban League’s* program where she began preparing for her GED in June 2001. Holmes dropped out of school after 10<sup>th</sup> grade when she became pregnant. **“When I had my baby girl, I thought that my dream of going to college was over. I thought I wasn’t even going to finish high school. But your life doesn’t stop.”**

The Career/GED program allowed Holmes to study for her GED around her childcare schedule. She worked on the GED computers several days a week and also attended job readiness workshops. *Urban League* sent her to an intensive customer service training at Walgreens. Holmes says the training was very competitive and inspiring.

Holmes’ instructors encouraged her to begin testing for the GED examination as soon as possible. She says the biggest challenge in the 6 exams was the Constitutional Examination. She studied hard though, and, on August 30<sup>th</sup>, Holmes passed her final GED test.

Holmes has big dreams. She has already registered to go to college in January. She hopes one day to become a surgeon. She knows that will mean many more years of schooling but she has taken the first important step toward accomplishing her dream. Holmes’ instructor, Warren Thomas, says Holmes will do well in college. **“I think she has a goal set out and she has her eyes set on that goal. I know that she will accomplish what she has set out to do.”**



**Workforce Development has just contracted with three service providers to provide career services to youth in school: Manpower & Zion Benton High School, Waukegan School District’s Alternative/Optional Program & CLC’s Educational Talent Search Program.**

*We recently interviewed Halina Krajcer, an employer and member of the Workforce Investment Board, to get her perspective on employment in Lake County.*

**I understand you recruit for *Salem Services*. Can you tell us a bit more about your job and how long you have been recruiting?**

I have been with *Salem Services*, a supplemental staffing firm, for the past 11 years. As *Staffing Coordinator*, I recruited, interviewed and placed job applicants in administrative support positions for various companies both in Lake and Cook counties. For the past two years, as *Corporate Recruiter*, my primary job responsibility is to recruit qualified employees for our five locations.

**You are a member of the *Workforce Investment Board*, what is your role and involvement as a board member?**

The ultimate goal of the Board is to provide a workforce system that will meet the needs of both employers and employees in Lake County. I serve on the *Marketing and Employer Linkages Committee* whose purpose is to increase awareness and use of our services by employers, workers and job seekers. These services are provided by the IETC centers, both in Grayslake and Waukegan, and all their partner organizations. They include job placement, training, and workshops.

**How would you characterize the job market in Lake County right now?**

The job market in Lake County is very much reflective of the slowing economy. It may take a job seeker a longer time to find a job.

**What can a job seeker do to make him/herself more competitive?**

In order to be more competitive, many job seekers need additional technical skills. Most jobs now require knowledge of computers – especially such programs as *Microsoft Word*, *Excel* and *PowerPoint* and the use of the Internet.

**What are the primary qualities that you, as an employer, seek in a potential employee?**

In addition to good technical skills, a potential employee should be dependable, reliable, flexible and willing to learn. A positive attitude and professional appearance make a great first impression.

**How do you go about recruiting potential employees?**

I recruit potential employees in a variety of ways. I attend job fairs, do on-site visits at IETC offices and colleges, use various job sites on the internet, including the **Illinois Skills Match** ([www.illinoisskillsmatch.com](http://www.illinoisskillsmatch.com)), and do presentations on job related topics at various schools, training programs, and job clubs.

**What resources are available to employers as they seek to hire qualified applicants?**

Employers need to use a multi-faceted recruiting strategy. In addition to the traditional advertising sources such as the ChicagoTribune and local papers, employers also need to attend job fairs, utilize the various job internet sites, and take advantage of all the services offered at their local IETC office.

*Workforce Development* welcomed **Vickie Brown**, Job Developer, to its team of staff in September.



## **DID YOU KNOW?**

*The Earned Income Credit* is a special tax credit for workers who meet certain requirements and file a tax return. For more information, check the website [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). Refer to Topic 601 or Publication 596.

## Computer Skills Enhance Production Career

**David Rizoff**, who has worked in production for more than 15 years, has been laid-off twice during his career. The second time, he sought out the services of *Workforce Development* at the *IETC*. He has a message now for other jobseekers. **"Your best source of information is to use *Workforce Development*."**

**Rizoff was laid off from** *Deluxe Video* in 2000; he then worked unsuccessfully for another company for a short period of time. When he started to look for another job, he could not find anything that paid more than \$10 per hour. It was then that he approached *Workforce Development* for help.



*Workforce Development's* Margaret Rolfe met Rizoff in March 2001. She evaluated his skills and interests and suggested that Rizoff might benefit from some computer software training. Rizoff agreed. **"I know computers are vital in many businesses these days. I wanted to learn more about software. I knew some COBOL, but I didn't really know how to use a computer in an everyday setting."**

**The Lake County Health Department's  
Workforce Development Program**  
415 Washington St., Ste 104  
Waukegan, IL 60085

*Workforce Development* sent Rizoff to computer training at a local school, *First Institute*, from April to June 2001. After graduating, he worked with Job Developer, Barbara Ramirez, to find a position. His greatest dream, he told her, was to work at Abbott Laboratories. Ramirez helped him identify more potential employers, but also sent him to prepare for the Abbott employment exam in *Workforce Development's* computer lab.

In the beginning of September, Rizoff's dream came true when Manpower placed him at Abbott Laboratories as a **Biological Operator**. He earns higher wages than he's ever made before, and says that he feels his computer software training gives him the opportunity for further growth. **"My computer training gives me the possibility for promotion. I definitely want to try my best. I feel that the computer is one of the things that will help me advance."**

Rizoff hopes to become a permanent employee by January 2002. In the meantime, he's enjoying the perks of his current position. **"I work 3<sup>rd</sup> shift which I like because I'm not rushed to get out and do things at the end of my day. I like using the company's fitness center at the end of my shift. And my job is really interesting. I know I'm making an important medical product. That feels good."**

The Mission of the **Lake County Health Department's Workforce Development Program** is to enhance Lake County's economic stability. *Workforce Development* serves both businesses and workers by providing a quality work force. *Workforce Development's* activities are overseen by the Workforce Investment Board.

*Thank you to all who contributed to this edition especially Halina Krajcer, Liz Nelson, Joyce Parnell, Leslie Piotrowski, Margaret Rolfe, & Warren Thomas. editor: Eva Locke*  
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